

Winnebago language

The **Ho-Chunk language** (*Hoocqk*, *Hocqk*), also known as **Winnebago**, is the traditional language of the Ho-Chunk (or Winnebago) nation of Native Americans in the United States. The language is part of the Siouan language family, and is closely related to the languages of the Iowa, Missouri, and Oto.

"Winnebago" is an exonym, an Anglicization of the Sauk and Fox word *Oinepegi*.^{[4][5]} The anglicized form of the endonym is "Ho-Chunk".

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Winnebago	
Ho-Chunk	
<i>Hoocąk hoit'éra</i>	
Native to	Midwestern United States
Region	Wisconsin, Nebraska, Iowa, South Dakota, Illinois, and Minnesota
Ethnicity	1,650 Ho-Chunk (2000 census) ^[1]
Native speakers	250 (2007) ^[1] Mainly older adults (no date) ^[2]
Language family	<div>Siouan<ul style="list-style-type: none">Western Siouan<ul style="list-style-type: none">Mississippi Valley<ul style="list-style-type: none">Chiwere–Winnebago<ul style="list-style-type: none">Winnebago</div>
Writing system	Latin (Ho-Chunk alphabet), Great Lakes Algonquian syllabics
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	win
Glottolog	hoch1243 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/hoch1243) ^[3]
Linguasphere	64-AAC-d

Phonology

Phonemic Inventory

Ho-Chunk's vowels are distinguished by nasality and length. That is to say, the use of a nasal vowel or a long vowel affects a word's meaning. This is evident in examples such as *pqq* 'bag' compared to *paa* 'nose,' and *waruc* 'to eat' compared to *waaruc* 'table.'^[6] All of Ho-Chunk's vowels show a short/long distinction, but only /i/ /a/ and /u/ have nasal counterparts.

<u>Oral vowels</u>	<u>Front</u>	<u>Central</u>	<u>Back</u>
<u>High</u>	<u>i</u>		<u>u</u>
<u>Mid</u>	<u>e</u>		<u>o</u>
<u>Low</u>		<u>a</u>	
<u>Nasal vowels</u>	<u>Front</u>	<u>Central</u>	<u>Back</u>
<u>High</u>	<u>ĩ</u>		<u>ũ</u>
<u>Low</u>		<u>ã</u>	

Ho-Chunk's consonants are listed in the following table:

		<u>Bilabial</u>		<u>Alveolar</u>		<u>Postalveolar</u>		<u>Palatal</u>	<u>Velar</u>		<u>Glottal</u>
		<u>plain</u>	<u>ejective</u>	<u>plain</u>	<u>ejective</u>	<u>plain</u>	<u>ejective</u>		<u>plain</u>	<u>ejective</u>	
<u>Nasal</u>		m		n							
<u>Stop</u>	<u>voiceless</u>	p	p'	t					k	k'	ʔ
	<u>voiced</u>	b		d					g		
<u>Affricate</u>	<u>Voiceless</u>					tʃ					
	<u>Voiced</u>					dʒ					
<u>Fricative</u>	<u>Voiceless</u>			s	s'	ʃ	ʃ'		x	x'	h
	<u>Voiced</u>			z		ʒ			ɣ		
<u>Approximant</u>		w						j	(w)		
<u>Trill</u>				r							

Typical of Mississippi Valley Siouan languages, Ho-Chunk has aspirated /p/ and /k/ phonemes but no aspirated /t/.^[8]

Nasalization Rules

In Ho-Chunk, nasalizable vowels /a/, /i/, and /u/ are always nasalized when they occur after nasal consonants /m/ and /n/. The nasality spreads to an adjacent vowel if that vowel is nasalizable as well.^[6] The spread operates across syllable or word boundaries and can move across consonants /h/ and /w/, but is blocked by all other consonants. Examples include *nqĩžq* 'a tree' and *ha'ųwĩ* 'we (exclusive) do':

nq̣a q̣ hiẓ̌a
tree one

nq̣ĩẓ̌a 'a tree'

ha- ųų -wi
1.E.A- do -PL

ha'ywǝ 'We (exclusive) do'

Another frequently occurring nasalization rule is /r/ to [n] alternation: the /r/ consonant is pronounced as [n] when it immediately follows a nasal vowel. That is shown in the sentence *Mqǝhǝ haanǝnǝ juujuxšǝnǝ* 'My knife is dull':

Mqǝhǝ ha<ha>nǝ=ra juujux-šǝnǝ
knife <1E.A>have=DEF dull-DECL

Mqǝhǝ haanǝnǝ juujuxšǝnǝ 'My knife is dull'

Dorsey's Law (Vowel copying rule)

There is a notable sound law in Ho-Chunk called Dorsey's Law^[9] which dictates the following:

- /ORS/ → [OSRS]

where O is a voiceless obstruent, R is a resonant, and S a syllabic sound. In other words, if there is an underlying voiceless obstruent (in Ho-Chunk, /p/, /c/, /k/, /s/, /š/, and /x/) followed by resonant (/r/, /n/, or /w/), the vowel following the resonant is copied into the proceeding consonant cluster. All Dorsey's Law sequences attested in the language are listed below, with V representing the copied vowel:^[7]

- pVnV
- pVrV
- kVnV
- kVrV
- kVwV
- sVnV
- sVrV
- sVwV
- sVnV
- sVrV
- sVwV
- cVwV
- xVnV
- xVrV
- xVwV

Multiple sources advocate that Dorsey's Law is a synchronic process in the language because of the way that things like stress assignment and the morphological process of reduplication are affected by it.^{[7][8][9]}

Dorsey's Law can apply within a single morpheme, as in /pra/ becoming [para] in the word *paras* '(be) wide, flat', or across morpheme boundaries, as in /šra/ becoming [šara] in the word *šaraše* 'you go there,' where š is the second person pronominal prefixing to the verb *rahe* 'to be going there.'

Metrical structure

Ho-Chunk is a mora counting, but syllable accenting language. The stress placement of words spoken in isolation is extremely regular. Single-syllable words always have a long vowel (two moras), and stress falls on the first mora (e.g. *áa* 'arm'). Two-syllable words have two moras, and primary stress falls on the second mora (e.g. *wajé* 'dress'). In words longer than two syllables, primary stress most often falls on the third syllable, with secondary stress on each even numbered vowel after the point of primary stress (e.g. *waǵiǵí* 'ball,' or *hocicjik* 'boy').^{[10][11]} A few rare examples of words with primary stress not on the third syllable include *booráxux* 'you break something into pieces' and *gikqnhé* 'to invite somebody.' These and other exceptions are a result of syllable weight affecting stress location.^[11] As seen in *booráxux* 'you break something into pieces,' when one of the first two syllables of a multiple-syllable word is a heavy syllable, then the main stress falls on the second syllable

Generally when words are spoken in sequence to form sentences, each retains its own stress domain. However, when two or more words are compounded, they are treated as a single word and form a new single stress domain in which the aforementioned patterns apply. Examples include *hqqbókahi* 'every day' (a compound consisting of *hqqp* 'day' and *hokahí* 'every') and *wqqgwácek* 'young man' (*wqqk* 'man' and *wacék* 'young').^[11]

Ho-Chunk's stress system is substantially different from that of other Siouan languages, which have main stress on the second syllable or second mora. It is theorized that Ho-Chunk underwent a stress shift one mora to the right at some point in its history.^[11]

Orthography

The official Ho-Chunk orthography derives from an Americanist version of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). As such, its graphemes broadly resemble those of IPA, and there is a close one-to-one correspondence between graphemes and phonemes. The orthography differs from IPA in that the nasal vowels are indicated using an ogonek. Thus, /ĩ/, /ũ/, and /ã/ are written as *ĩ*, *ũ*, and *q*, respectively. In addition, the postalveolar and palatal consonants are written as *c*, *j*, *š*, *ž*, and *y* (in IPA: /tʃ/, /dʒ/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/ and /j/), the velar fricative /ɣ/ is written as *ǵ*, and the glottal stop is written as ' .

The diacritic marks can be referred to in Ho-Chunk with the following terms: *sijic* 'tail' for the ogonek, *wookanak* 'hat' for the haček, and *hiyuša jikere* 'sudden start/stop' for the glottal stop.

For a short period of time in the mid to late 1800s, Ho-Chunk was written with an adaptation of the "Ba-Be-Bi-Bo" syllabics system. As of 1994, however, the official alphabet of the Ho-Chunk Nation is an adaptation of the Latin script. The Ho-Chunk Nations of Wisconsin and Nebraska represent some sounds differently in the alphabets that they use, as the Wisconsin tribe write a double vowel to mark longer length, and the Nebraska tribe uses a macron over the vowel (compare *oo* with *ō* for IPA /o:/). These differences, shown with example words, are demonstrated in the chart below. In total, the Ho-Chunk writing system consists of 26 consonant and 16 vowel graphs/digraphs.^[1] (<https://web.archive.org/web/20030423003555/http://www.hocak.info/>)

The sounds of Ho-Chunk with example words^[6]

Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin	Ho-Chunk Nation of Nebraska	IPA	Example word
a	a	a, ʌ	caš 'tapping sound'
aa	ā	aː	caa / cā 'deer'
ą	ą	ã, ɶ	nijpaŋa 'soup'
aa	ā	ãː	paą / pā 'bag'
b	b	b	boojaš / bōjaš 'marbles'
c	c	tʃ	caa / cā 'deer'
e	e	e, ɛ	serec '(be) long'
ee	ē	eː, ɛː	seep / sēp '(be) black'
g	g	g	gaaga / gāga 'grandma'
ǵ	ǵ	ɣ	ǵaak / ǵāk '(to) cry'
h	h	h	Hoocąk / Hōcąk 'Ho-Chunk'
i	i	i	kirikiriš '(be) striped'
ii	ī	iː	ciinaŋk / cīnaŋk 'village, town'
į	į	ĩ	hocįci 'boy'
ij	ī	ĩː	pji / pī '(be) good'
j	j	dʒ	jaasge / jāsge 'how'
k	k	k	keecąk / 'k'ēcąk 'turtle'
k'	k'	k'	k'ee / k'ē '(to) dig'
m	m	m	mijinaŋk / mīnaŋk '(to) sit'
n	n	n	nji / nī 'water'
o	o	o	xoro '(to) snore'
oo	ō	oː	coo / cō '(be) blue, green'
p	p	p	paą / pā 'bag'
p'	p'	p'	p'oop'oš / p'ōp'oš '(be) fluffy'
r	r	r	roohaŋ / rōhaŋ 'a lot'
s	s	s	sii / sī 'foot'
s'	s'	s'	rus'įs'į '(to) shiver, shake'
š	š	ʃ	šuuc / šūc '(be) red'
š'	š'	ʃ'	ruš'aš'a '(to) tickle'
t	t	t	taanji / tānji 'three'
t'	t'	t'	t'aa / t'ā '(to) fly'
u	u	u	waruc '(to) eat, food'
uu	ū	uː	huu / hū 'leg'

ʉ	ʉ	ũ	<i>gígʉs</i> '(to) teach'
ʉʉ	ũ	ũ:	<i>hʉʉc</i> / <i>hũc</i> 'bear'
w	w	w	<i>waa</i> / <i>wā</i> 'snow'
x	x	x	<i>xee</i> / <i>xē</i> '(to) bury, hill'
x'	x'	x'	<i>x'ooke</i> / <i>x'ōke</i> 'parents'
y	y	j	<i>iiyaara</i> / <i>iyāra</i> '(to) yawn'
z	z	z	<i>zii</i> / <i>zī</i> '(be) yellow, brown'
ž	ž	ž	<i>žuura</i> / <i>žūra</i> 'money, dollar'
		ʔ	<i>wa"ʉ</i> '(to) be, do'

Morphology

Verb structure

Ho-Chunk is an agglutinating and somewhat fusional language. Verbs contain several affixes to indicate things like person, number, tense, and mood.

Prefix field

Ho-Chunk uses prefixes on a verb stem to mark person, locative case, instrumental case, benefactive case, reflexivity (including possessive reflexivity), and reciprocity.^[12]

Person prefixes

Ho-Chunk verbs are inflected with eight pronominal categories marked for person and clusivity.^[6] Ho-Chunk is a pro-drop language; pronouns are used very infrequently, and information on grammatical person is found on the verb in the form of one or more prefixes.

1. First person singular (abbreviated 1SG)
2. Second person singular (abbreviated 2SG)
3. Third person singular (abbreviated 3SG)
4. First person dual inclusive (abbreviated 1I.DU)
5. First person inclusive plural (abbreviated 1I.PL)
6. First person exclusive plural (abbreviated 1E.PL)
7. Second person plural (abbreviated 2PL)
8. Third person plural (abbreviated 3PL)

Person marking in transitive verbs

Ho-Chunk's transitive verbs are inflected with agent (actor) and patient (undergoer) pronominals. The generic paradigm of the pronominal prefixes in transitive verbs^[6] is outlined below. The letter V stands in the place of the verb stem.

Transitive verb pronominal prefixes

	Patient								
		1SG	2SG	3SG	1I.DU	1I.PL	1E.PL	2PL	3PL
Actor	1SG		nij-V	Ø-ha-V				nij-V-wi	wa-ha-V
	2SG	hĭ-ra-V		Ø-ra-V			hĭ-ra-V-wi		wa-ra-V
	3SG	hĭ-Ø-V	nĭ-Ø-V	Ø-Ø-V	waaga-Ø-V	waaga-Ø-V-wi	hĭ-Ø-V-wi	nĭ-Ø-V-wi	wa-Ø-V
	1I.DU			hĭ-Ø-V					hĭ-wa-V
	1I.PL			hĭ-Ø-V-wi					hĭ-wa-V-wi
	1E.PL		nij-V-wi	Ø-ha-V-wi				nij-V-wi	wa-ha-V-wi
	2PL	hĭ-ra-V-wi		Ø-ra-V-wi			hĭ-ra-V-wi		wa-ra-V-wi
	3PL	hĭ-V-ire	nĭ-V-ire	Ø-V-ire	waaga-V-ire	waaga-V-ire-wi	hĭ-V-ire-wi	nĭ-V-ire-wi	wa-V-ire

In this table, the null symbol (Ø) is used to represent all third person singular actor and patient pronominals. It indicates that there is no overt prefix for those pronominals (in other words, that they are null morphemes). Some cells are left blank because there are no pronominal affixes associated with that particular person/number combination. In cases like these, the action is reflexive (i.e. I do something to myself, or you (plural) do something to yourselves). Reflexivity in Ho-Chunk is indicated with another prefix, *kii-*.

The sounds in the prefixes run together in casual speech, often leading to the deletion of the /h/ consonant and thus a long vowel or diphthong. This is evident in the example *waakere* 'I put them (standing),' in which the third person plural patient prefix *wa-* merges with the first person actor prefix *ha-*, producing *waa-*.

Person marking in intransitive verbs

Ho-Chunk's intransitive verbs fall into three main types: intransitive active verbs, intransitive stative verbs, and intransitive 'third person-only' verbs.^[6]

Intransitive active verbs are those which involve only human or animate agent(s). An example is *šgaac* 'play,' which is inflected for person and number as follows:

Person and number marking paradigm for intransitive action verb
šgaac

		Ho-Chunk verb	Translation
Agent	1SG	hašgac (ha-šgac)	'I play'
	2SG	rašgac (ra-šgac)	'you play'
	3SG	šgaac (Ø-šgac)	'he or she plays'
	1I.DU	hjšgac (hj-šgac)	'you and I play'
	1I.PL	hjšgacwi (hj-šgac-wi)	'we (inclusive) play'
	1E.PL	hašgacwi (ha-šgac-wi)	'we (exclusive) play'
	2PL	rašgacwi (ra-šgac-wi)	'you (plural) play'
	3PL	šgaacire (šgaac-ire)	'they play'

Intransitive stative verbs involve an action affecting a patient. This is characteristic of the verb š'aak 'to be old':

Person and number marking paradigm for intransitive stative verb š'aak

		Ho-Chunk verb	Translation
Patient	1SG	hjš'ak (hj-š'ak)	'I am old'
	2SG	njš'ak (nj-š'ak)	'you are old'
	3SG	š'aak (Ø-š'aak)	'he or she is old'
	1I.DU	wąągaš'ak (wąąga-š'ak)	'you and I are old'
	1I.PL	wąągaš'akwi (wąąga-š'ak-wi)	'we (inclusive) are old'
	1E.PL	hjš'akwi (hj-š'ak-wi)	'we (exclusive) are old'
	2PL	njš'akwi (nj-š'ak-wi)	'you (plural) are old'
	3PL	š'aakire (š'aak-ire)	'they are old'

Intransitive third-person-only verbs designate states and properties of mostly inanimate things, such as "(to) be delicious" or "(to) be expensive." They can only be inflected for third person singular or third person plural subjects (e.g. *ceexi* (Ø-ceexi) 'it is expensive' or *ceexire* (ceexi-ire) 'they are expensive').

Locative prefixes

Ho-Chunk has two locative prefixes, *ha-* 'on' or 'onto,' and *ho-* 'in' or 'into.' These prefixes were first described by William Lipkind in his 1928 grammar of the language^[11]. The prefixes are added to a verb stem as seen in the examples below:

mijk → **hamijk**

to lie (somewhere) → to lie on top of

mijk → **homijk**

to lie (somewhere) → to lie in

A locative prefix may derive a noun, a verb, or both. This is true for *homik*, which can refer to a verb 'to lie in' or a noun 'bed.' More recent learning materials refer to the *ha-* prefix as a superessive applicative marker, and the *ho-* prefix as an inessive applicative marker.^[6]

Instrumental prefixes

Ho-Chunk has a set of instrumental prefixes which indicate that an action is accomplished by means of some instrument, force, or special type of instrumental movement. These prefixes are translated into English with such phrases as 'by foot,' 'by hand,' or 'by striking.' Some sources list eight instrumental prefixes in Ho-Chunk,^{[6][13]} while others recognize a ninth *nq̄q-* 'by internal force' (phonologically identical to *nq̄q-* 'by foot').^{[14][15]} These prefixes are listed first with their English translation, then paired with a stem *wax* 'to break, cut or sever a string-like object':

Instrumental prefixes

	Instrumental prefix	English translation
Inner	<i>gi-</i>	'by striking'
	<i>ra-</i>	'with the mouth, with the teeth'
	<i>ru-</i>	'by hand'
	<i>wa-</i>	'by pressure, by pushing'
Outer	<i>boo-</i>	'by shooting, by blowing, by force'
	<i>m̄q̄q-</i>	'by cutting'
	<i>n̄q̄q(1)-</i>	'by foot'
	<i>n̄q̄q(2)-</i>	'by internal force'
	<i>taa-</i>	'by extreme temperature'

Instrumental prefixes paired with stem *wax*

Ho-Chunk verb	English translation
<i>giwax</i>	'break string in two by striking'
<i>rawax</i>	'bite string in two'
<i>ruwax</i>	'break string in two by pulling'
<i>wawax</i>	'break string by downward pressure'
<i>boowax</i>	'shoot string in two'
<i>m̄q̄q̄wax</i>	'cut string in two'
<i>n̄q̄q̄wax</i>	'break string in two by foot'
<i>n̄q̄q̄wax</i>	'string breaks of own accord'
<i>taawax</i>	'string is burned in two'

The instrumental prefixes are identified as 'Inner' or 'Outer' due to their position relative to other prefixes attaching to the verb stem. Inner prefixes are closer to the verb stem, while outer prefixes are farther away on the left edge of the word. Instrumental prefixes are found in all Siouan languages,^[16] and it is theorized that outer instrumentals originated as nouns or nominalized stems.^[17]

Suffix field

Ho-Chunk's suffixes mark number, tense, mood, negation, and aspect.

Syntax

Basic word order

Like other Siouan languages, Ho-Chunk's basic word order is Subject-Object-Verb (SOV). An example of a typical sentence is *Hinŭkra wažqtirehižq ruwŭ* 'The woman bought a car.' In a sentence with two objects, such as *Hinŭkiža hocŭcihižq wiiwagaxhižq hok'u* 'A girl gave a boy a pencil,' the canonical word order is Subject-Indirect Object-Direct Object-Verb. Word order is relatively free in Ho-Chunk; however, while a word order such as *Wažqtirehižq, hinŭkra ruwŭ* 'The woman bought a car' is permissible, the change from the basic neutral word order of SOV requires a prosodic pause indicated by a comma.^[18] Without this pause, an interpretation 'A car bought the woman' is possible, though highly unlikely.

Negation

Negative phrases are expressed with a particle, such as *hąąke* 'not' or *hąkaga* 'never' paired with the suffix/enclitic *-ni* 'not.' Both elements are required in such phrases: the particle precedes the verb phrase, while *-ni* is suffixed to the verb. The following examples demonstrate this construction:^[18]

Wąąkra heepšini
wąąk-ra heepšj-ni
man-the sneeze-NEG

Wąąkra hąąke heepšini 'The man did not sneeze.'

Hąkaga t'eehaanj wa'ųaje
hąkaga t'ee-haa-nj wa'ų-ha-jee
never die-1.cause-NEG aux-1SG-POS.VERB

Hąkaga waką t'eehaanj wa'ųaje. 'I never kill snakes.'

Language revitalization

Although the language is highly endangered, there are currently vigorous efforts underway to keep it alive in Ho-Chunk communities. In Wisconsin, the Hocąk Wazija Hacı Language Division (<https://www.hoocak.org/>) runs several language classes, an immersion daycare, and a language apprentice program.^[19] In Nebraska, the Ho-Chunk Renaissance program teaches the language in local and reservation schools. Both tribal governments recognize the importance of technology in language learning, and are active in Facebook and YouTube to reach the younger generation of learners. A "Ho-Chunk (Hocąk) Native American Language app" is available for iPhone, iPad, and other iOS devices.^[20] Language is a crucial aspect of Ho-Chunk culture:

"Within a lot of Native American cultures, language and culture go together," Lewis St. Cyr, language program director for the Ho-Chunk, said. "You can't have culture without language and you can't have language without culture. The importance of it is of who we are."^[21]

Notes

1. Winnebago (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/win/>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
2. Winnebago language (https://www.ethnologue.com/16/show_language/win/) at *Ethnologue* (16th ed., 2009)
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External links

- [Ho-Chunk and Winnebago Explained](http://www.baraboopubliclibrary.org/files/local/wardvol1/05%20Ho-Chunk%20and%20Winnebgo%20Explained%20-%20About%20Section%20AA.pdf) (<http://www.baraboopubliclibrary.org/files/local/wardvol1/05%20Ho-Chunk%20and%20Winnebgo%20Explained%20-%20About%20Section%20AA.pdf>)
- [Hocank Language](http://www.mpi.nl/DOBES/projects/hocank/) (<http://www.mpi.nl/DOBES/projects/hocank/>), Documentation of Endangered Languages website (DOBES in German)
- [Hoocąk Waaziija Hacı Language and Culture Division](https://web.archive.org/web/20030423003555/http://www.hocak.info/) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20030423003555/http://www.hocak.info/>), Ho-Chunk Nation (of Wisconsin) website, extensive materials about Hočąk language and restoration efforts
- William Lipkind, "Winnebago Grammar" (<http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/tp&CISOPTR=28275&CISOSHOW=28201>), Wisconsin History
- [Hočąk-English/English-Hočąk Learner's Dictionary](https://www.christianlehmann.eu/publ/ASSidUE21.pdf) (<https://www.christianlehmann.eu/publ/ASSidUE21.pdf>) , Second Edition, edited by Johannes Helmbrecht & Christian Lehmann, 2006, University of Erfurt
- [Beginning Hocąk on Memrise](https://www.memrise.com/course/5450/beginning-hocak/) (<https://www.memrise.com/course/5450/beginning-hocak/>) , based on Wisconsin Hocąk; phrases and vocabulary

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